CHAPTER TWENTY

Not So Obvious?

The Structural Elements of Caring. An Example for Critical Qualitative Studies

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It is easiest, perhaps, to think of caring as a very localized, individual, relational activity that is nearly entirely about the specific people involved in its endeavor at a very particular time and place. Certainly, within our families and among our friends, this would be the intuitive way to think about caring. When we care for one another through our interactions, the caring is riddled with cultural norms and values that render it criticizable as any culturally patterned mode of interactivity might be. For example, why should it be the case that in my dissertation study, men received more care interpersonally than women (Korth, 1998, 1999, 2003)? In her critique of the scholarship on caring, Jaggar (1995) argued that care inquiry has not adequately addressed issues of its own critique — a critique that stands in relation to the interpretations offered up by those engaged in the caring. In general, care theorists have only begun to make refined connections between care and criticalism (for example, Eaker-Rich & van Galen, 1996; Luthrell, 1996; Noddings, 2000). One way to begin such an endeavor would be to examine the structural elements of interpersonal forms of caring because it is likely the structural elements form threads in the links between the systematic engagement of caring activities and the interpersonal meanings of the caring.

For my dissertation (Korth, 1998), I conducted an ethnographic study interested in how six adult work friends navigated their individual and group identifications vis-à-vis involvement in their own particular friendship group. What I found was that their identity navigations, to a large extent, happened through caring. The caring was very personal and spanned a variety of activities from providing practical help and support to providing emotional sympathy and encouragement to smoothing things over when the interactions got rocky. I interpreted particular activities as caring because this was how the participants themselves made sense of those same activities. Reconstructive analysis (Carspecken, 1996) provided a way for me (a)

to articulate the range of possible interpretations and the assumptions carried through those interpretations, and (b) to locate when actions were interpreted as caring (Korth, 2003). But there was something about the caring that was not articulated directly through the reconstructions of their interpretations of one another. These hermeneutic analyses were quite useful, but some questions remained. For example, the hermeneutic reconstructions did not get at the gender differences in the patterns of behavior.

This chapter focuses on the analysis of structural elements of caring and what such an analysis yields. The findings indicate that caring was comprised of cultural structures and patterns of effects that did not get clearly articulated through the hermeneutic reconstruction of the group's interactions, and thus required additional methods of analysis. This would not be uncommon in social research because all meaningful action is constituted in part by cultural structures and certainly, also, has the potential of producing effects that fall outside actors' interpretative expectations. By articulating the structures involved in the face-to-face patterns and habits of the group members, a new critique is possible. Critical findings are those that make explicit inequity, oppression, distortions to the communicative potential of participants, ideological influences and other such categories of impact on the autonomous, free and equal expression and participation of actors in engagement with one another.

On the level of hermeneutics, the study's findings indicated that these friends cared for each other in ways that, at least tacitly, mediated inequalities and distortions systematically at work in the culture they shared. The findings also illustrated that their caring activities served as an implicit critique of micro-cultural practices that (a) seemed to put people's dignity and sense of connection at risk, and, that also (b) seemed to hide ideological distortions/contradictions. For example, sometimes a group member told a joke that others did not think was funny. They laughed anyway because they did not want their friend to feel foolish. They pretended the joke was funny and pretended the teller was clever. They did this as a way of caring for their friend, but the caring also covered up a potential interpretation of the friend's identity and skill that would have marked him or her as somewhat less acceptable in the micro-culture. This example of caring among the friends itself points to a limitation in the micro-cultural boundaries of acceptable identities, behavioral repertoires, and so forth. Habermas (1987) reminds us that "[m]echanisms that repress an actual conflict by excluding it from the realm of situation interpretations and action orientations and [by] covering it up with illusions have pathological side effects" (p. 229).

There is another level of critique that has not been well-attended to in the scholarship of caring: Little to no efforts linking the interpersonal caring (caring achieved through face-to-face or direct interactions of people) to the cultural and ideological material that the acts both engage and (re)form. The structural analysis presented in this chapter moves forward from the hermeneutic critique to a structural critique. There have been a lot of concerns raised about care theory/research scholarship that indicates just such a need (Tronto, 1984, 1987; Hoagland, 1990; Jaggar, 1995: Korth, 1999, 2001; Goodman, 2008). Some critiques have been philosophical, suggesting that to theorize about the possibilities for caring within institutions without addressing the contrast between the ways activities are coordinated institutionally and hermeneutically is to invite a categorical error (Schutz, 1998). It is also clear that our caring activities can be riddled with, even while working against, the ideological elements of social life; yet caring analysis to date has not dealt with this problem. There are only a few examples in the literature where an analysis of caring has been used to explicate social inequities

that the caring acts themselves seem aimed at countering (see Korth, 2001; Valenzuela, 1999 for examples). In fact, Jaggar (1995) argued that our caring actions may leave the very conditions underlying the vulnerability or need for care totally ignored or masked. Another theorist suggested that "Care is distorted whenever it compromised the autonomy of the recipient or the caregiver" (Clement, 1996, p. 27). Hoagland's (1990) work indicated that when children were cared for in ways that did not include some criteria other than the child asking for the care, those children were more demanding rather than more giving. The critical work on caring still predominately focuses on interactional analyses of caring, largely by applying definitions and criteria for caring to given encounters. In this chapter, I will illustrate one qualitative approach to analyzing structural elements of interactions and I will exemplify what such an analysis articulates in the context of my study with an adult friendship group. This analysis enunciates the kind of critical scholarship that seems presently lacking in the literature. I begin with a brief excursus on the topic of "structure" and "structuration." Then, I describe the methods used for this study. Following the methods sections, I present the findings. The chapter concludes with a call to expand our qualitative analyses to include these more systematic, counter-intuitive, structurally instantiated elements as a way of increasing the critical capacity of our qualitative research.

Structure and Structuration: A Brief Excursus

A well-acknowledged central problem in social theory involves how to adequately address the integration of social life as it comes about through the actions of autonomously engaged people acting as agents of their own life stories on the one hand, and as it comes about through the systematic coordination of action consequences and functions with momentum that exceeds the actors' purposeful engagement on the other hand (Willis, 1977; Habermas, 1984, 1987; Giddens, 1990). Willis (1977) wrote that class culture "comprises experiences, relationships, and ensembles of systematic types of relationship which not only set particular 'choices' and 'decisions' at particular times, but also structure, really and experientially, how these 'choices' come about and are defined in the first place" (p. 1). Habermas (1987) indicates that one's "goal-directed actions are coordinated not only through processes of reaching understanding, but also through functional interconnections that are not intended by them and are usually not even perceived within the horizon of everyday practice" (p. 150). These functional interconnections are part of what gets named through an analysis of structures. If social theorists limit their analysis to the lifeworld, that is, to the horizon of hermeneutic interpretations that constitute the form and substance of everyday communicative engagements, they will fail to grasp or describe "all the counterintuitive aspects of the nexus of social reproduction" (Habermas, 1987, p. 151).

If we are to say that there are effects of our actions that exceed our intentions, we need to talk a little bit about intentions. Most philosophers think of intentionality as subjective because there is a privileged epistemological distinction between the way I grasp my own intentions and the way some other person would grasp my intentions. Objectivity on the other hand, refers to the epistemological process that implies multiple access as its principle. Objectivity relates to the question of intentionality because it is the way in which we can understand the conditions of action claimed when we engage our intentions. To intend something or other, I must do so within a milieu of particular conditions I take to be objectively given; conditions you would also be able to identify, name, count, etc. using similar procedures. In other words,

there are a set of conditions that structure people's interactions and that must be invoked if one's intentions are to be met or taken as sensible. Economic conditions, political conditions, and cultural conditions serve to structure our actions. In each of these cases, objectivity is the mode through which the conditions can be identified and described. Structural relations can be inferred from these conditions. Marx (1973) argued that every social fact with fixed objectified form "appears in a vanishing moment in the movement of society" (the conditions for acting). We need a way to conceptualize the structures that link the conditions of action with actors' intentions.

Structuralism

Saussure (1960) introduced the argument that all of the elements within a linguistic system can be connected via sets of contrasts and differences that constitute a "structure." Lévi-Strauss (1967) applied this contrasting structural approach to cultures. "Structuralist models of society…basically viewed social phenomena as the outward manifestation of grammar-like rules that actors articulate in their daily lives" (Carspecken, 1996, p. 179). Structures do not exist in space and time. Their existence is virtual and as such they cannot be observed, but must be inferred.

> Unlike structural patterns in biology, the structural patterns of action are not accessible to [purely external] observations; they have to be gotten at hermeneutically [in the first place], that is, from the internal perspectives of participants. (Habermas, 1987, p. 151)

This is not the same thing as Levi-Strauss's (1967) proposal that structures were merely posited mental models on the part of the observer (Giddens, 1990, p. 64). For Giddens, the structural reproduction of the social systems [social systems, for him, is are "systems of social interaction" (p.66)] implies people remembering how things should be done, social practices that are organized through the shared knowledge about how things should be done, and the presupposition that people are capable of doing things in the manner in which they should be done according to the social knowledge (Giddens, 1990, p. 64). These structures cannot be reduced to rules, prescriptions, formulas, or determinates of either their own reproduction or social action. Structures are recursively implicated in the social action of actors who could always have acted otherwise; actors whose volition cannot be discounted in either a practical or theoretical sense.

According to Carspecken (1996), "Cultural conditions of action are those that resource and constrain the volition of the actor" (p. 190). He continued on to assert that:

> Volition itself depends on cultural structures to exist …[and yet] [e]ach meaningful act … will usually reconstitute cultural structures and be a new creation to a certain extent" (p. 191).

The volition of actors (which as social scientists we get at this through reconstructive analyses) will always depend on cultural structures, drawing on this structure with the effect of both reproducing it and innovating it in the same act. Carspecken (1996) advocates a social-science approach that includes examining the distribution of cultural themes, frequency of cultural themes, and currency of cultural themes. Doing this makes it possible for the social scientist to take the next analytic step and identify cultural structures that may be operating through actors' engagements with one another, but outside their mutual reflexive monitoring or intentions. Giddens' provides a theoretical model that can facilitate how we address this double-sidedness of structures which coexist through cultural conditions and through volition, but are themselves not determinate of either.

Giddens' Structuration

Giddens (1990) uses the word social system to include the "visual pattern" of social structure with its socio-reproductive continuities as patterns in space and time (p. 64). He advocates a structural analysis that "involves examining the structuration of social systems" (Giddens, 1990, p. 64). His concept of structuration requires us to take into account both the volition of actors and the conditions of action without falsely dichotomizing these or choosing between them in terms of priority.

Marx wrote, "The conditions and objectifications of the process are themselves equally moments of it, and its only subjects are individuals, but individuals in mutual relationships, which they equally reproduce anew" (Marx, 1973, p. 712). For Giddens, who draws on Marx, action and structure presuppose one another. They are not dualisms, but a duality. The duality of structure relates "to the *fundamentally recursive character of social life, and expresses the mutual dependence of structure and agency*. . . [in other words, the duality means that] structure is both the medium and outcome of the practices involved in social interaction through both society and culture, conditions for acting and acting." (Giddens, 1990, p. 69). "According to this conception, the same structural characteristics participate in the subject (the actor) as in the object (society). Structure forms 'personality' and 'society' simultaneously — but in neither case exhaustively" (Giddens, 1990, p. 70). Giddens said that it is a necessary feature of action that actors could have acted otherwise and that when they act, they do not merely and perfectly reproduce the structures and conditions for their acting. There is an interesting and important tension between the reasons people will offer up for their actions (for example, "because I cared about Grant") and all the additional explanations and contributions involved in producing the action as part of a stream of conduct (Giddens, 1990, p. 57). As a person is able to reflexively monitor her actions within a context of unacknowledged conditions of action and unintended consequences of action, the person is able to influence those same conditions and a critical effect is possible. That is, reflexive monitoring of these structural and systemic aspects of our actions affords us opportunities to critique the conditions and consequences of our actions for inequity, oppression, ideological distortion, and so on. Giddens (1990) produced what he called a stratification model of social action that (1) has the actor engaged in reflexive monitoring of action and (2) the rationalization and motivation of action (given through the hermeneutic situation) set within a context of unacknowledged conditions of action and unintended consequences of action.

This approach has some methodological benefits. If we want to get at the second aspect of his stratification model, we need a way to articulate the context of unacknowledged conditions and unintended consequences of action. The theory of structuration tells us that the structures are co-constituted through both the volitional and interpretive activities as well as the unacknowledged and unintended aspects of the action.

Methodology

The analysis presented in this chapter uses data from a larger critical ethnography that will not be fully reported on here (see Korth, 1998, 1999, 2003). I spent a year engaging with an adult work-related, friendship group. All the members of the group, including me, had some tie to the local university (hereafter referred to as "LU"). My original research question had to do with how these friends located themselves both as autonomous people and as members of the

group. I found that it was through a variety of caring acts that they navigated their individual identity claims and their belongingness to the group, both at the collectively interactive level and through dyads.

Participants

I was a peripheral member of the group of friends who participated in my study. I had known each of them for about five years, but their friendships with one another were longer than ten years. Their ages ranged from 35 to 80 at the time of the study. Grant was the oldest member of the group and he had a stroke requiring extensive rehabilitation so he was unable to participate in the study past the third observation.

- Jim was in his mid-40s. He earned a Ph.D. in British literature and literary criticism from a prestigious Midwestern university. He was a professor at LU. He had served (in the past) as an administrator there. He was married to Jan at the time. Both Jan and I had taken classes as his student.
- Jan was in her early 40s. She has a graduate degree from LU and was a practicing psychologist's associate. She was a student of Helen's, Peter's, and Jim's. She and I took classes and internships together.
- Peter was in his 50s and had been at LU longer than any of the others. He earned two doctorates and a secondary teaching license. He was a professor of education at LU. Helen, Jan, and I had all been his student at one time or another.
- Helen was in her late 50s. She was the hostess of the group as the group tended to gather at her place on Friday nights. She earned her master's degree as a graduate student of Peter's and Jim's. She had been teaching psychology classes at LU since that time. I had taken a class from her and so had Jan. Stan was her son.
- Stan was in his 30s. At the time of the study, he was attending a local community college and living at his mother's home (Helen). He cooked for the group and helped his mother host get-togethers. He did not attend the lunch get-togethers.
- Grant was a professor emeritus at the same prestigious university where Jim earned his Ph.D. In fact, Jim had been his student. Grant served LU as an adjunct faculty member in literature and cultural studies.

Both Helen and Grant have passed away since this study was conducted. I remain in intermittent contact with Peter, but none of the others.

DesignI designed the study following Carspecken's (1996) five-stage critical ethnography. I went to lunch with the group every other Friday for a year, participated in Friday-night discussion get-togethers (on Fridays alternating from the lunches), conducted three group interviews, and multiple individual interviews (expect with Grant). Hermeneutic reconstructive analysis (Carspecken, 1996) of the particular caring interpretations among the friends led to an articulation of a modal typology of caring acts. The typology was composed of three interactive modes through which the caring acts were engaged. The caring actions described through the findings were not meant to generalize across friendship groups either in their interpretation or with respect to the mode through which they were engaged. However, the typology itself has been used in other contexts and, thus far, has been open enough to prove useful (Korth, 2001).

Basic Description of the Hermeneutic Findings

Some of the caring acts were interactively coordinated in explicit, overt ways where the caring motivation itself was quite candidly and openly available without discretion. I called this mode of caring "overt-explicit." An example of the kind of activity for this group was problem solving. While problem solving, participants openly acknowledged a problem and solicited the help of others in resolving the problem. Others openly offered potential ideas in the service of trying to help their friend solve the identified problem.

Some of the caring acts were interactively coordinated in implicit, overt ways; this mode was called "overt-implicit." These acts were engaged implicitly, from within other things being said or done, but they could at any point have been made overt and explicit as a part of the caring. An example of a kind of activity that was coded into this mode (for this group of friends) was "empathizing." In such cases, the caring was understood and responded to through implicit aspects of the interaction, although the caring motivations could have been made explicit at any time (this is why we would think of it as overt—the caring motivations and intentions were an overt feature of the meaning of the activities even when left unsaid). "The history of shared experiences among group members made it possible for actors to …[engage in caring] without having to propositionalize the range of needs or connective responses [appropriate to the situation]" (Korth, 1998, p. 105). "An implicit reference can become a symbol for a fuller, core expression" (Korth, 1998, p. 106). Acts that fell into this mode in the typology indicated the degree of intimacy and history the friends shared as well as the public conditions within which they were acting. Sometimes the caring was kept implicit largely so that others in the physical space would not be privy to the vulnerabilities or needs being cared for. Most often, the implicit nature of the caring was a direct manifestation of how well the group members knew one another and understood one another.

The third mode in the typology was "covert-implicit." The covert nature of these activities meant that the caring aspect of the action *only* entered the interactions implicitly. The participants engaged in recognizing tacit identity claims and subjective references of their friends along with understanding contradictory and/or oppressive normative structures at play in the setting. Caring for the identities and feelings of others forged the most direct link between the caring AND recovering one's full humanity (to use Freire's 1974 ideas) against the oppressive structures of a culture. Covert-implicit caring relied on implicit or tacit interpretations of meaning and required actors to refrain from naming the caring as such because this would forfeit its interpretability as caring. One example of covert-implicit caring encounters that was common among this group of friends was relieving tension. Here is a description by Helen:

> Sometimes if it looks like a particular exchange is getting a tad too intense or uncomfortable, we [the women in the group] step in and kind of diffuse it by, maybe just asking a stupid question.

We can imagine a context whereby someone might say: "Hey, I am getting worried that we are starting to make each other feel bad and perhaps we should figure out a way to proceed without doing that." This would have been an overt way of addressing the same need. Often, covert-implicit caring was engaged precisely because the overtness or explicitness would have called into the interpretive field a foregrounded negative, pejorative, or devalued identity (within the context of the group) or posed a challenge to accepted umbrella norms and values within the group. For this group of friends, to be overt and explicit in this instance would have

meant acknowledging that people's egos are vulnerable to their ideas being accepted. And, to do that would have made the egos more vulnerable because it would have meant that they (as the participants) were not somehow okay enough with who they were to separate an assessment of their identities from assessments of their ideas. For this group, that would have been a challenge. The overt-implicit caring covered over the challenge, avoided it so to speak, and in so doing also failed to lodge a reflective critique of the vulnerability.

Analyses of Cultural Structures

It was the covert-implicit mode of caring that first piqued my interest in looking at examples of caring that seemed to cover up vulnerabilities; vulnerabilities that seemed to be the effect of some culturally distorted way of thinking about people. Thus, after, the hermeneutic description of caring seemed rich and complete enough, I then wanted to turn my attention to a more systematic understanding of the caring activities across the various instances of caring. To do this, I assumed a relative outsider's perspective toward the same set of data. I marked the observational data according to distribution, routine, and functional outcomes related to caring activities. Then, I re-examined the interview data for structural indicators — talk that seemed to point toward either localized patterns of effects and structures or an awareness among participants of cultural conditions as being in operation through their group interactions. I performed this analysis in order to describe conditions and consequences that might be structurally connected with the caring activities for this particular group of friends. Ultimately, the point was to locate structures which co-exist in the cultural conditions/unintended consequences and hermeneutic interpretations of the activities.

First of all, I began by marking the distribution of caring activities across group members. The distribution of activities is an effect that is not typically monitored for or taken up agentically by participants, although certainly actors can learn to pay attention to the distribution of activities. On the whole, the distribution is not intentionally produced by participants and so, in this way, can be said to be an unintended consequence of the interactions as they were regularly patterned or habituated. Recall the quote above by Helen: she was aware that women tended to offer stupid questions as a way of diffusing tension. This was her description of the distribution of acts (and it certainly did match what I found), but the distribution itself was not part of what the actors intended when offering up or accepting the stupid questions as a way of relieving tensions.

After being able to describe the distribution of caring activities, I looked more closely at what kinds of structural relations seemed involved in the distribution and organization of caring. The point of my analysis was to discover locally instantiated structural patterns (Giddens' ideas facilitated this). This analysis helped further clarify the conditions within which group members cared for each other, the manner in which caring was both liberated and constrained by the system of cultural resources, and the way in which an analysis of care was able to serve as a critique of social practices.

Giddens (1990) proposed two principal ways to study the properties of social systems. First he suggested that social scientists can "examine the constitution of social systems as strategic conduct"; that is, "to study the mode in which actors draw upon structural elements — rules and resources — in their social relations" (p. 80). In my study, this analytical approach made it possible to describe two broad structural complexes: "Structures of Expertise" and "Structures of Service." Second, Giddens (1990) advocated identifying unintended consequences of

practices that are themselves chronically reproduced features of the social system (p. 80). One such consequence revealed by this analysis of care is the chronic reproduction of "experts" over and against others. This structure of valuing experts objectified attributes of intelligence and verbal articulation, and consequently reproduced a systematic division between those who were treated as "experts" and those who were not (and there were gender effects to this). Caring helped to reproduce this division because through caring, actors both (a) enacted identities that were positive and highly valued given this particular system of experts, and (b) compensated for/covered inequalities that were perpetuated through these notions of "expert." In the findings section, I present the findings and the particularities of the analyses.

I used a variety of accepted strategies to validate the data and the analyses. These included using recording devices, double checking the transcriptions, using long-term engagement in the field, multiple interviews, peer debriefers, member checks, negative case analysis, strip analysis, and examining the match between my analysis and participants' commentaries (Carspecken, 1996). I do not report on anything that did not survive these techniques.

Findings

There are three sets of findings that are reported here. First, I describe the objectification of needs that were open to caring in the friendship group. Second, I describe the cultural structures that resourced and constrained caring activities within this group. Third, I locate the unintended consequences that were the effects of caring among this group of friends.

Objectification of Needs

The objectification of needs as it occurs among this group of friends sets up the preconditions of reification from which more formal systemization of caring or institutionalized mechanisms of caring could be derived (Habermas, 1987, see chapter 6). By objectification what I mean is that a need is conflated for interpretational purposes to an objective correlate. We will see an example of this below. The objectification of needs tends to limit/hone the range of depth of interpretation engaged by the participants. I will illustrate how this happens.

The objectification process enables or resources caring because it makes it possible for actors to coordinate their activities around an operationalized focus to which each of the participants has, in principle, equal access (for example, focusing the conversation on a specific topic of concern to one of the participants). This process also enables actors to explicitly prioritize needs and corresponding responses; that is, they can order needs from most pressing to least pressing. Also, it is through the objectification of needs that the setting of these priorities can win the rational support of others.

The objectification process not only enables, but also constrains caring, because it can effectively limit the range of meaning enacted and the scope of needs that get taken up. The process artificially conflates feeling with condition, and norms with effects. This conflation could suppress the validity process as well by limiting what can be easily queried. Distortions in understanding can occur when the objectified claims are treated as if they constitute the whole interpretive field. This act of reification (equating an objectified claim with the whole interpretive field) conceals nonobjectified claims that might also be part of the interpretive milieu.

It's easy to see how this happens through events coordinated to meet practical needs. Practical needs (like money for lunch, a napkin to wipe one's hands, a ride back to campus

when one doesn't have a car, a replacement drink when one's glass is empty, and so forth) were quickly matched with caring acts that were directly suited to meet those needs (Korth, 1998). Let's look at an example. We were eating lunch outside and we had been talking about Grant's recent trip to the Midwest. Grant cracked a joke and everyone laughed. Then, I made a bid for caring about a practical need:

BARB: [Speaking to Peter.] Did you get a napkin? [Licks fingers. Am without a napkin.]

PETER: [Looks at me.] Here. [Hands me a napkin lying beside his sandwich. Reaches insight the bag for another napkin.]

[Helen looks under her sandwich for a napkin.]

BARB: [Takes the napkin. Looks at Peter.] Thank you.

PETER: I think she put one in there, right? [Digs deeper into his bag and pulls a napkin out.] Yeah.

This caring sequence was an insertion into the flow of an ongoing interaction. My bid isolated a need for a napkin and the way to meet the need by assuming a means-end appearance. The objective claims associated with my need for the napkin were most prominent in the range of possible interpretations and the connection between the need and meeting the need was easily grasped. If a napkin had not been available, then claims about the next best way to meet the need would have surfaced, still emphasizing the objective realm. Subjective claims (claims about my feelings) were not in the foreground. What if the following had happened instead?

BARB: Oh, gosh. Look at this mess I'm making. And I don't have a napkin. This is embarrassing. [to Peter] Did you get a napkin?

In that example, a feeling of embarrassment was simultaneously linked to the condition of being without a napkin while eating messy food and so the objective correlate was "without napkin" or "needs napkin". The condition would have received attention and Peter would have probably handed me his napkin with the expectation that addressing the condition would simultaneously be caring for my feelings. If, in my expression, I had conveyed feeling more intensely embarrassed, then in addition to addressing the objectified condition (need for a napkin) someone would have probably cracked a joke (this was a common way of caring for people who were embarrassed among this group of friends) about how embarrassing it is for the whole group to have to take me out in public and this would have worked to dissipate my negative feelings of embarrassment.

Subjective claims were objectivated by hooking the claim either to the conditions (as was suggested above) or to the evidence required for claiming "what is." In the first case, I found, for example, that "feeling depressed" was consistently linked to the condition of "being out of work." Thus, feeling depressed was objectivated as "without work" (an objective condition). In the second case, the objectification was the effect of hooking the subjective or identity claim to objective evidence. Here is an example of how that worked among this group of friends. When Jan expressed feeling "dumb" or "inadequate," the other members responded by debunking the evidence upon which the feeling seemed based — treating her claim as if it could be queried via objective evidence about Jan.

Needs emphasizing normative expectations were also objectified. According to my study, normative needs were objectified as effects. For example, Helen expected her friends to take care of her by protecting her confidentiality when she spoke about difficult experiences at work. The normative claim involved was this: Friends should not divulge confidences outside the friendship circle. That normative claim was objectified for caring: We need to protect each other's confidences because if we do not, then outsiders can make damaging use of the information. Objectifying the need in this way served to truncate other possible aspects of the meaning — like perhaps Helen's feelings of worry and trust. The objectified (group) need for confidentiality was linked to potential, observable effects, namely that breaking confidentiality could have damaging effects because the information could be used by outsiders in harmful ways. To reiterate, the need was abstracted from a normative claim and conflated with a potential effect. What resulted was an objectification: Confidentiality is necessary because it keeps negative effects from accruing.

Through this objectification process, needs were abstracted from their more complicated claims presupposing the needs and then hooked with observable features (conditions, evidence, or effects) that involved and facilitated the principle of multiple access. The objectification process took on a quasi-mathematical structure. Here are the patterned forms of the objectifications enacted by this group of friends through their caring:

- Practical needs were identified with needs already objectified that immediately implicated "ends". The relation was structured through means.
- Subjective claims and identity claims were abstracted to needs and then objectified through a relation connecting the claim with either conditions or evidence.
- Normative claims were abstracted to needs and then objectified through a link with (potential) effects.

It is only through this kind of objectivating process that caring can take on the appearance of acts oriented toward consequences when the care originates as activity oriented toward understanding. If we appropriate insights from Habermas's (1984, 1987) *Theory of Communicative Action* and Giddens's (1990) treatise on the *Central Problems in Social Theory*, it would seem plausible to expect that the macro-system would only be able to lay claim to care-giving through this objectification process: abstracting "felt" needs from their presupposition in claims and structuring a relation between those needs and means, conditions, evidences, or effects.

Analysis of Structures

To engage in a structural analysis of the caring activities, I examined feedback loops that seemed already in place and primed for enactment. I looked for the routinized mechanisms of action that operated through caring activities to reinstate the caring or to thwart it. I identified two fundamental structural complexes through which caring was both resourced and constrained among these friends: Structures of Expertise and Structures of Service. These structures were strongly embedded in the group's interactions and could, in themselves, sustain an extensive exploration. Here, I limit my discussion of them to their involvement in caring. As Giddens (1990) suggested, these structures were simultaneously, yet unintentionally, reproduced as they were drawn upon in action.

Structures of Expertise. "Structures of Expertise" were broadly employed by this group of friends across many of their interactions. It was, perhaps, one of the most stable of all reiterated structures. "Structures of Expertise" supported the notions that intellectual expertise is valuable, earned, and relatively rare. In this particular group, Jim and Grant were most definitely thought of as "experts." This construction was reproduced through (1) the coordination of discourse strategies, (2) the hierarchical ordering of knowledge along discipline lines, (3) the concentric layout of participatory contrast sets, and (4) the counter-expert: an oppositional binary.

Expertise was something the group was able to recognize and describe. Peter, Helen, Stan, Jan, and I all explicitly expressed a desire to learn from Jim and Grant that was not reciprocally expressed by either of the two of them. Jim's and Grant's expertise assumed a "factual status" among group members. No other members enjoyed such a pervasive designation of "expert." Other's individual worth was measured against these experts. The elitism, lack of reciprocity, and inequality that were manifest in these structures were not part of their intentions with one another.

> **PETER:** It isn't a matter of him [Grant] trying to be the leader of the group or anything. Not at all. But because he is such a bright guy. So interesting.

The group's everyday discourse strategies interdependently contributed to the reproduction of the "Structures of Expertise." To clarify this, I wrote a skeletal third-person description of the flow of a discussion. Within this description, I used brackets to identify the discourse strategies employed. I follow the description with a record of some corresponding comments (drawn from the interviews) regarding the strategies used by Jim and Grant. These comments represent the ways in which individuals were aware of discourse strategies, an awareness that did not extend to grasping their systematic relations. None of the members articulated the interdependence of these strategies or their overall involvement in structuring "expertise" among group members. Here is the description:

> Everyone was sitting in Helen's living room, discussing a paper that they had read together. The paper was written by Barbara Hernstein Smith on communication theory. Grant had selected it for discussion. Grant read it aloud to the group. Jim and Grant had already read the paper and discussed it together [topic control]. After Grant finished reading the essay to the others, people started discussing various points raised by the author. Jim and Grant, critics of literature and well-read in linguistics, listened to the many positions and arguments put forth by others. They hung back in the conversation for a while, letting others talk [wait time]. Then, they entered the discussion, clearly not surprised by any of the ideas presented thus far [always already anticipating the ideas of others while they themselves were equipped with more novel, less anticipatable ideas]. When they began to talk about the essay, they did so by invoking the names of other theorists such as Bahktin, Chomsky, Stanley Fish, and Searle, without elaboration [name-dropping]. As Jim and Grant talked, they used what could be taken as ordinary words in highly technical ways. For example, Jim and Grant engaged Stan in an entire sequence about "interests" without clarifying their own more technical use of the "interests," which, unbeknownst to Stan, did not precisely correspond with his use [vocabulary specificity]. Sometimes one or the other of them, Jim or Grant, would launch into a monologue about an idea or the two of them would engage in a dialogue that excluded the others as talkers/contributors [monologues/dialogues] relegating them to the passive role of listener/learner. In the end, even though they entered the discussion later than others, Jim and Grant each talked more than anybody else [conversation monopolizing]. Moreover, they presented their ideas and critique modestly, taking great efforts to not sound haughty or overconfident of their own mental power [stylistics]. For example, Jim said, "Well, I don't know. It seems to me, and, uh, I could be wrong, that …"

I isolated the following comments from the interviews to help pinpoint how these discursive strategies were at play and how other, non-expert members of the group were aware of the strategies.

Topic control	"Um, it was clear that the master [Grant, in this case] had spoken and he didn't really want much discussion on it." – Stan
Wait time	"And of course, Jim also waits like Grant [to speak], he likes to ponder." – Helen "Jim would wait [pause] and when we got through mucking around, after a while, maybe twenty minutes, half an hour had gone by, or something like that, then he would come in. He would be sitting there with a slight frown on his face, bent over, cogitating during much of that discussion. And then he would begin to hold forth. And he would try to pick it [the discussion] apart or comment on certain salient features of it for elaboration. Toward the end of the discussion, my, my understanding is that he is the one who comes in and tries to ties it all up." – Peter
Novel ideas	"But, I think because he [Grant] has such an interesting mind that when he speaks, the group just listens…. Not that we don't respect each other. Grant's viewpoint is never what you think it's going to be…. He has a torturous mind and sometimes it's difficult to follow him as he goes wandering down a path." – Jim
Monologues/ Dialogues	"I remember some passionate exchanges between Jim and Grant, for instance, in which the rest of us just kind of played audience while they were in that mode…. Oh, listening and trying to follow. I didn't always follow…. It's like watching a, a mini debate. So, you're not exactly a spectator, just trying to track what's going on there, rather than wanting to jump in, make a point, ask a question." – Peter
Monopolizing	"I do like to participate and I don't like not finding an entre for too long. Although I often will sit there, especially when Jim or Grant get going. I mean th, they'll really hold the floor, sometimes for long periods of time with very little interruption. … I do appreciate what they're doing, and I like, and I do like to listen…but I do feel a desire to burst in sometimes and participate." – Peter

Figure 1: Discursive Strategies

Stylist devices were also used. For example, modest talk was considered appropriate among this group of friends. The more expert one was, the less one would put forth personal merit. Thus, modesty represented the stylistic understatement of expertise. Also, rhetorical questions facilitated topic control and indicated expertise. Experts provided answers to questions, used vocabulary in technical ways, and dropped the names of philosophers without explanation.

It was the combined effect of each of these discourse strategies that helped to designate Jim and Grant as experts. Disrupting these discourse routines could risk disrupting the "structures

of expertise." Relations of complementarity work through these linguistic structures. Those complementary relations can be expressed through the following characteristics.

Experts	**Non-Experts** **(everyone else — the complement of experts)**
Topic control	Topic acceptance: need for topic was accepted/ taken for granted; non-experts accepted the topics raised by experts as valid and important
Novel ideas	Predictable points of view: non-experts' best achievements involved (1) clear articulation of ideas rather than the composition of novel ideas; (2) the ability to appreciate novelty; and (3) an openness to the expert's new ideas
Monologues	Attentive (listening) learners: non-experts expressed interest —their interest is expected/taken for granted
Pondering (wait) time	Jumping right in: non-experts were willing to risk saying something foolish, jumping in without the apparent thoughtfulness or deliberation witnessed with experts
Asking rhetorical questions	Needing to learn: non-experts were willing to accept help in the learning process; operating under the assumption that they do not know all the answers
Providing answers	Asking questions, probing answers: non-experts were expected to express inquiring interest for which experts were able to supply answers

Figure 2: Stylistic Devices

Hierarchy of Knowledge. Expertise was also structured along academic disciplinary divisions. Hierarchical relations were assumed through these structures. Philosophy and literary criticism (from the humanities tradition) were most highly valued. Applied professional fields carried the lowest value. Vocabulary, knowledge, expertise, name-dropping, and viewpoints (which emerged through group interactions) assumed currency according to the discipline (or field) they reflected. For example, with respect to the name-dropping strategy, referring to well-known philosophers was more highly valued than referring to well-known educators. With this group, the hierarchy was like a series of ceilings. There were limits on the extent to which a very good idea reflecting knowledge in clinical psychology could be appreciated and valued within the interactions. That ceiling was lower than the ceiling accessible through a very good point that drew on knowledge in anthropology. Neither of these two disciplines had ceilings that approached the value of philosophy. These ceilings were not part of the actors' individual or collective intended consequences of interactions. The ceilings were arranged like this:

Figure 3: Hierarchical Knowledge Structure

Here is how group members talked about the hierarchy:

> Peter: "I think also that there just simply has been no, no real attempt to explore what people like us [referring here to me and him — people in education] do. [Pause] Again, the themes are literary themes and philosophical themes. They are not ones like we, like we deal with in a lot of our lives." It's interesting that Peter said this, because, actually, Peter taught educational philosophy, so it's not as though Peter does not deal with philosophy; here even the range of what is considered "philosophical" has been determined by the structures of expertise such that Peter's educational philosophy does not count as philosophy, even in his own way of characterizing what is happening.

> Stan: "He [referring to Jim] tends to comment in a philosophical way, which an indication of a man of great learning." Stan's comment here assumes that this hierarchy is an accurate reflection of one's expertise and learning.

> Jan: "I just hope that I'm a valuable member. I hope that I'm able to add something to the discussion… most of the time I'm, I'm, I'm asking more than I'm commenting, or commenting on their explanations. I'm not as well versed in the literary parts as the main group is." Jan is indicating that she hopes her questioning is value-added to the discussion and her sense of herself as a valuable participant in the group discussion relates to this hierarchy of knowledge. We don't even get a sense here of what her knowledge is, just that her absence of literary knowledge means that the best she can do in the discussion is ask questions.

This hierarchy worked within the group to emphasize value relations across different domains of knowledge, ultimate positioning users of knowledge in an analogous hierarchy.

Concentrically Organized Participatory Contrast Sets. Concentrically organized contrast sets were also part of the "Structures of Expertise" and they were most identifiable through roles (hence they are named according to the most fundamental role configurations. Contrast sets comprised the domains of the circles as well as constituting the boundaries that marked off domains. There were three circles, which I labeled the inner expert circle, the middle participation circle, and the outer observer's circle. I will list each of the major sets involves in this concentric structuring.

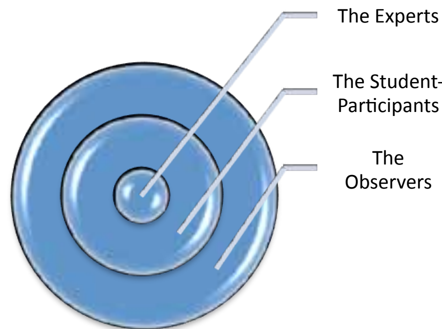

Figure 4: Concentrically Organized Contrast Sets

Jim and Grant were in the inner "expert" circle. The contrast sets that were associated with this inner circle included (1) various highly value intellectual perspectives, such as Greek philosophy versus French structuralism; (2) role sets, such as "Proud Professor with His Prized Student" and "Intellectually Equal Sparring Partner for Grant"; and (3) historical experiences versus present experiences. These contrast sets were exclusionary and highly specific to the experts involved. The sets systematically excluded other participants, other academic perspectives, and others' experiences. Even though these sets were specific to Grant and Jim, they invoked common assumptions that were shared by other members as well. Some of those assumptions were articulated in earlier chapters of this text (for example, the assumption "we are, in part, our history"), and some of those assumptions dovetailed with the structures of expertise already described (for example, that philosophy is considered a highly valued intellectual discipline). While Grant and Jim acted from within the expert circle, Peter, Helen, Stan, Jan, and I supported the claims necessary to stabilize this set of contrasts ideologically.

The boundary between the inner circle and the next circle of student-participants was partially constructed through contrast sets that systematically limited access to expertise. Practically speaking, this boundary was not permeable — it was the least fluid and the contrast sets that generated the distinction between the expert circle and the student-participant circle were relatively stable. The contrast set involved in this middle student-participant circle were: (1) teachers versus learners; (2) the contrasting discourse strategies already described; and (3) getting serious versus "mucking around." The asymmetry across group members, which was an effect of these expert structures, was most visible through these contrast sets. These contrast sets corresponded to the expert/non-expert dichotomy spelled out above. Everyone except for Grant and Jim interacted most often from within this second ring. Grant and Jim were not excluded from this student-participant circle, but others were excluded from the inner expert circle.

The middle ring — student-participants — was comprised of the following contrast sets: (1) using humor versus serious attempts to be smart (according to Peter, one could always count on getting a laugh with a joke, but the worst thing one could do in the group was say something stupid); (2) voicing perspectives from the field of psychology in contrast with perspectives from the field of education; (3) hosting in contrast with being one of the guests; and

(4) males in contrast with females. Three of these four relate quite obviously to one's activities within the group, but they move to decreasing flexibility in terms of reciprocity and access among participants whose interactions with the group are best described through this middle circle. Almost any of the participants could engage by using humor or by making a serious attempt to be smart; participants could not engage as either male or female, they were stuck with their socially assigned gender expression, which had structural effects on participation.

The first contrast set (using humor versus serious attempts to be smart) highlighted the most valued interactive skills among group members. Success with humor was more achievable for student-participants, and failure at acting smart was more devastating in terms of its results. Failed attempts at humor or being smart were, at times, taken up as bids for care. Also, humor was used to release tension (another act of caring among this group of friends). The use of humor was most often initiated by males.

The second contrast set involved interacting through disciplinary perspectives of lesser value than those exhibited by the experts. In this contrast set, psychological perspectives were considered more interesting and salient than educational perspectives. Almost anyone in the group could raise questions and comments from these perspectives, but they were distinguished from one another in terms of how they influenced the interactions.

The third contrast set (being host in contrast with being one of the guests) was generally a fixed contrast, though in principle this set could be reciprocated. In practice, Stan and Helen served the group as hosts. Stan and Helen drank the most alcohol and often would not have been able to drive home if the get-together had been hosted somewhere else. The hosts had special interactive privileges — they were considered necessary to the functioning of the group regardless of their assumed limitations in expertise. The group expressed appreciation for the hosting. Jan broke into this set by consistently bringing snacks along to the discussion sessions.

The fourth contrast set (male versus female) was fixed. Gender worked mostly to eliminate females from certain realms of discourse (sexist joking and lines of discourse, especially) and from initiating bids for explicit patterns of caring. Overall, the males dominated interactions of all kinds, including caring interactions. By dominated I mean produced more, controlled more, and controlled how much access one could have to the conversation. Helen exhibited rude-like behavior in attempts to work against the mark of gender, but Jan hedged participation and rarely initiated engagement in the discussion.

The boundary that marked this middle ring from the outer ring was a contrast set of interest (which marked the student-participant circle) versus non-interest (observers). This boundary was porous and could switch across topics and over time.

The outer ring (observers) is best understood through the following two contrasts: (1) the importance of real life in contrast with talk about ideas, and (2) putting up with the group in contrast with getting enjoyment out of watching group members interact. This ring was often presupposed by interactions that are structured through the inner and middle circles. The boundary set and expectations for participation pointed to the potential for members to act from a position that was structured by the contrast sets of this outer ring. Jan was the member most likely to act from this outer ring. I also acted from this outer ring in my role as ethnographer.

Counter-Expert: An Oppositional Binary. An oppositional binary worked probably from a highly tacit impetus to counter the "structures of expertise." Ultimately, the binary itself supported

those structures of expertise, but they can be considered counter-expert because the activities were structured in opposition to the claims presupposed through the expert structure. For example, one time Grant dropped the name Bahktin (a philosopher) and Stan said, “Who the fuck is Bahktin?” He was told, “That’s something you spray on sores” (referring to the antibiotic spray Bactine). These counter-expert oppositions were often not appreciated and resulted in sanctioning. Sanctions took the form of ignoring or limiting access to speak via politeness strategies, leaving open only rude- or belligerent-type behavior, or succumbing to the expertise. Bids for implicit forms of caring were sometimes offered. In other words, when someone acted through this counter-expert binary, they were interpreted as needing sanctioning or needing care. Oppositions included rude-like behavior (loud, insistent interruptions, for example), refusals to accept technical or jargonistic vocabulary, failure to acknowledge that experts knew more, and insistence on having the last word. Oppositional structures were accepted when they took the form of humor (which did not directly challenge the experts), but not when they represented serious attempts to outsmart the experts. Caring acts were more acceptable ways to counter the inequalities perpetuated through these structures of expertise than engaging in counter-expert activities. Stan was the member who engaged in counter-expert activities most often. Even so, during his interview he clearly espoused components of the structures of expertise in a way that made it seem that he was personally committed to them. He did not say things like “Jim and Grant know a lot, but so do I and what I know goes unrecognized” or “Jim and Grant think they are experts, but really other expertise is just not equally appreciated in this group.” Instead, he said things like reported above: “He [referring to Jim] tends to comment in a philosophical way, which an indication of a man of great learning.” In other words, Stan acknowledged the structures of expertise as legitimate, thus his oppositional activities seemed to only tacitly suggest an awareness of a kind of oppression meted out through these structures.

Stan’s response to these structures of expertise in interactions reminds me of Peter McLaren’s (1986) work on the culture of pain. Stan did not articulate counter claims, but during interactions he acted as if he tacitly recognized the inequalities and felt pained by them, pained in ways that he did not express explicitly. Helen also participated in the counter-expert activities that seemed indicative of dissatisfaction. Helen’s and Stan’s interjections resulted in being cut off, failure to be recognized, and misinterpretations. Helen used ambiguity to retain some dignity in the group despite interactive sanctions. Stan’s oppositional activities resulted in a standstill that left the experts intact and left Stan in need of care to save face. Both Helen and Stan set themselves relatively outside these expert structures through the binary. It was only Helen and Stan who expressed any sort of recognition of the oppressive, unequal effects of the structures of expertise. Furthermore, Stan rejected bids for caring for him that would have tied him to the structures of expertise. In this way, he also tacitly acknowledged the link between some interactively established needs for caring that served to simultaneously reiterate the oppressive structures of expertise. During his interview, Peter talked about a lack of reciprocity, but during interactions he consistently employed the structures of expertise and did not, at any point, take up counter-expert claims.

Summary and Speculation. I just articulated four componential clusters of the “Structures of Expertise.” With respect to care, these structures of expertise emerge as a core explanation of inequality. Because “expertise” was a legitimate form of inequality, it was sustained even among

friends who espoused strong democratic ideals. Expertise was legitimized, in part, through these very structures. Caring disrupted this legitimized form of inequality through implicit patterns when structures of expertise were directly involved, for example, through deferring intellectually.

On particularly common caring activity in the group, coded as "deferring intellectually", disrupted the potential negative consequences of the structures while reinstating them precisely because these caring acts were implicitly patterns. The disruption occurred because experts momentarily (and in authentically) sacrificed their claim to expertise in the spirit of honoring the personal worth and dignity of the person (and disrupting the idea that expertise was more valuable than appreciating others regardless of their level of expertise). But the caring acts also reinstated the structures because the underlying assumptions that validated the category "expert," the legitimizing force, was not undermined for the group as long as the caring was left implicit. In this way, caring comprised a corrective for these particular structural inequalities, but fell short of dismantling them. Why not dismantle the offending structures? I speculate that at the time of this study, such a dismantling would have undermined significant and pervasive structuring of group interactions. The friendships might not have been able to recover after such an extensive shake-up.

The structures of expertise were similarly disrupted and, also, reconstituted through care that worked, in large part, to promote positive identities, because for this group, identities were deemed as "positive" given the structures of expertise. The positive identity claims, constructed according to notions of expertise, were not equally distributed. There was unintentional yet systematically limited access to those identity claims. That is to say, the recognition of those identity claims and ultimately the claiming itself was limited according to these structures of expertise. Nevertheless, through caring activities, Jan, Helen, and Stan did gain limited access to these specific positive identities. The validity of expert identities remained unquestioned, but access to those identities was given through caring. In this way, care momentarily recovered equality, but without de-legitimizing the systemic pattern of the asymmetry.

I want to speculate briefly on what might anchor these "Structures of Expertise" outside the face-to-face interactions the data give us. A system of academic experts has been legitimized through institutions of higher education. Consider these analogous trends. In the state of Texas, education courses are funded at a lower rate than courses in arts or sciences. Expertise is a marketed commodity in higher education. Expertise is recognized through the institution by much the same markings that got Jim and Grant recognized as the group's highest experts. The credentialing process includes prioritizing theory and research over practice, valuing breadth of knowledge in a specialized area, prestige of the university granting the degree, types of degree, and so on.

Structures of Service. "Structures of Service" denotes a cluster of systematically reproduced patterns involved in actors rendering services, services such as providing a place to gather, offering feedback on papers, and participating on faculty committees. Service was coordinated hermeneutically around objectified needs through two orientations. First, norms (convention or obligation) were used to explain why one would be willing to provide the service, and, second, means-end rationality was used to explain why the particular service provided was the best, most efficient way to meet the objectified needs. These structures were particularly useful for problem-solving and meetings practical needs. Also, these structures of service required and

facilitated, at times, a systematic way to prioritize needs. Services were primarily interpreted as acts of care by participants.

Domains. "Structures of Service" were organized through domains of server/served relations. There were three domains of server/served relations marked by activities of group members. These were practical service, collegial service, and professional/institutional service. The domains differed primarily in terms of the binding force of the relation between server and served and the nature of the service itself (orientation toward the objective world implicated through the service). There were a few features that the three domains held in common. Service in any of the three domains was unidirectional for any given event. Also, those who were served were not seen as more powerful than the server, at least in the common use of the term of "power." The relation between server and served was not understood by actors to be the effect of coercive or persuasive uses of power nor as the effect of exchange. The server conceived of herself as freely offering to meet the identified need for the served person, group, or institution. Yet, there were interactive sanctions that might have worked behind the backs of actors to regulate these structures of service and in the case of professional and institutional service, pay was exchanged to secure a minimum expectation of service.

One server/served relation was practical with the most frequent example being a relation between host and group members. Services rendered within this domain included such activities as providing a place for group members to gather, supplying food and drink, attending to individual needs for comfort, and specific needs for such things as rides. The binding force in the relation between server and served was convention. Politeness strategies and skills were used to enact these services, but the main requirements for this service had to do with knowing and having what it took to meet the need (supply) and willingness. Members did not ascribe much skill to the rendering of practice service and yet, Stan began developing his talents in this area. He prepared special snacks for the group and was most attentive to the comfort and needs of guests. Jim was rarely the server in this domain. This set of services was less valued than other domains of service, but were nevertheless frequently made use of.

The second domain of server/served relations was collegial. Actors performed the following services in this domain: critiquing papers; covering classes for each other; solving professional problems; and providing professional support. Within this domain, only Jim, Grant and I were (historically speaking) served by others critiquing our papers. Peter expressed some resentment about this, so while he did not articulate the structural nature of these services, he did have a tacit awareness of them. He said:

> Just like we try to encourage Jim, You know, "oh, more stud with this novel [Jim was writing a novel.] Come back and read with us." [His tone sounds authoritative, almost miffed.] We reinforce the hell out of him, frankly. [Voice calm again.] And I think that was deserved, but there's been no reci—, reciprocation. Like he knows that I'm working on a manuscript.

Covering classes was only a possible service for Peter, Jim, Helen, and Grant, or me (not Stan or Jan). Moreover, Stan received only restrained support as a student, but not as a professional. Other activities in this domain were evenly distributed across group members. The binding force of the collegial relation was charm — individual commitments to the persons being served. A certain amount of skill was required to render collegial services. This domain of rela-

tions was least accessible to Stan and Jan and, therefore, caring activities that emerged through these services were correspondingly inaccessible to them.

This third domain was the most highly valued of the three. These first two domains differed from the third domain in two important hermeneutically knowable ways. First, the obligations that bound the server to the served through service were freed up if the intended receiver declined the service. In other words, the obligation was to offer the service with the understanding that one was willing and able to make good on the offer. If the offer was not accepted, then the server was not bound to the service. In her interview, Helen reported:

> With what Jim and Grace [a woman who did not participate in the study] were going through, they're still going through, I think that Jim's concern was that no group member stick his or her neck out [in support]. And that was sort of frustrating to members of the group. But once again, that was his choice.

In the previous domain, professional and institutional service, the server was bound to perform the service through moral principles and could only be freed of the obligation through a shift in moral interpretation or view. Service was conditioned through an institution or profession (an example of which is coming up).

A second difference between this third domain and the first two was that the service was considered a "good" thing to do in the first two domains, but the "right" thing to do in the third domain. That is, it was considered good by participants to provide a place for members to gather or to offer feedback on a paper, but it was considered right and obligatory to take one's place on a committee that served the institution. During a lunch get-together, Jim told Peter and me:

> I mean, from my point of view, I'm, **I am** [pause] ethically obligated to raise questions to, a-a-about violations of university policy. I mean, I don't have any choices.

Thus, the third domain of professional/institutional service was marked by server/served relations that were bound by ethics. While it was certainly true that these relations involved paid positions, the services of this domain were adhered to through ethical obligation rather than contract of service for pay. In fact, group members poked fun at each other about their inability to orient their own professional activities according to pay that would have, no doubt, resulted in them decreasing the amount and quality of their service within the institution. The kinds of activities that fell into this domain of service included, for examples, responding in a professionally supportive way to students and participating on institutional committees.

The professional relations constructed within this domain were comprised of more formalized institutions role sets that carried with them expectations for appropriateness. The binding force of these relations held regardless of the response of other actors involves in the institution or profession. In other words, the server could not be released from this obligation merely because others representing the institution declined to accept the service. Instead, rejection pushed the server toward an analysis of means. The obligation was reiterated through the instantiation of moral principles, for example, in policies or contracts that could be secured outside the face-to-face events of server and other representatives of the institution.

The server/served relations were initiated via a contract for work. Once in a while the contractual relations were foregrounded. This happened particularly when the need for employment had group members performing tasks to which they did not feel morally committed

or maybe even tasks that seemed in opposition to their moral commitments. These tasks were forgiven by the group and were not counted as service here. For example, the administration asked Peter's academic division to do some work that Peter (and other group members) did not think was appropriate. Jim said,

> Yeah. Oh yeah. I mean there's no question! I don't in any way hold the division's faculty [especially faculty] responsible. They weren't. This wasn't something they chose to do. If the provost comes into a division meeting and tells 'em to do something, it's pretty likely they're going to do it!

Peter performed a task under administrative force and against his own good judgment. The task was not considered a service. Peter's service, instead, was enacted through his efforts to counter the task that he thought threatened the integrity of the institution. This service, you can see, was tightly bound by what Peter would argue was right or wrong. Caring was, at times, the interactive switching plate between acts initiated by external forces over and against acts structured by internalized moral force. Jim, Peter, and I engaged in sympathizing with one another and neutralizing negative thoughts and feelings in our interactions about Peter's situation.

Prioritizing Needs. The "Structures of Service" also revealed a patterned way of resolving conflicts regarding how to prioritize competing needs/requisite service. There were two operating schemes for making such a decision: personal and typological. I am writing of needs that were explicit and for which the group could target its services. Both mechanisms for prioritizing needs (the personal and the typological) resulted in a hierarchical ordering.

The first operating scheme (the personal) revealed an interesting conversion. First Grant's service-oriented needs, which were at some points in competition with each different person in the group, were always prioritized. Jan rarely explicated a need for the group to attend to, but when she did, her needs were prioritized. With both Grant and Jan, services were rendered if a need was expressed. Grant's service-oriented needs were prioritized because the needs were pressing (linked to his frail health and advanced age). Jan's requests for service were rare. For both people, their requests for services were most often met, and met as if the services were really necessary. Prioritizing needs beyond Grant's and Jan's was ordered according to amount of interaction power wielded within the group. Jim's needs were prioritized over Peter's and mine. Helen's and Stan's needs were treated as a low priority when they were in competition for service needs of other group members. Stan and Helen provided far more services than they received.

The needs were also ordered typologically. Practical needs intruded on interactions and they were addressed in the moment. Collegial needs were resolved before institutional-/profession-oriented needs when there was competition between bids. Usually these were ordered linearly so that each of the identified needs could be served according to its turn.

Services required by Grant were mostly practical with collegial needs running second. Jim received many services from group members in all three domains. In terms of frequency, Jim was the recipient of most of the services.

Summary and Speculations. Release from the demands to reach face-to-face consensus regarding service was achieved in the first two domains (practical service and collegial service) through routine practices and was powered by shared expectations of what was good. Release from the

demands to reach consensus through face-to-face negotiations regarding service in the third domain was accomplished via policies and shared moral principles and powered by personal moral commitments.

Structures of service resourced explicit patterns of caring, especially problem-solving, sympathizing, and stimulating positive thoughts and feelings. These structures legitimized service-oriented roles that were compatible with certain caring roles in the group. These caring roles looked very similar to the ones Noddings (1984) studied as carer and cared-for: unidirectional for any given event, highly explicit, singular, specified meeting of needs. Structures of service resource interactive caring to meet needs one at a time. Multiple needs had to be met in a linear, prioritized fashion. The structures further limited caring by controlling access to server/served roles according to criteria that made access unequal.

This set of findings leads us to speculate on the complexities of serving others in an interactive context. Service cannot be thought of as a synonym of caring, but its structures will certainly influence the engagement of caring.

A related consequence worth speculating about is that maybe these structures of service make it reasonable for group members to accept university pay that is too low for living comfortably and doesn't adequately support one (given the years of invested education required) in the economic system by supplanting one's reasons for performing the service-oriented work with moral and conventional rationale. Praxis needs might be met by constructing one's self as a certain kind of moral person willing to commit regardless of compensation.

Analysis of Unintended Consequences

In this section, I want to shift the focus away from structures that resource or constrain caring toward the unintended consequences of caring as it was enacted among this group of friends. As members of the group cared for each other, some effects accrued that would not have been considered part of the intentional purposes of the actors. The unintended consequences were the byproducts of the acts brought about by distortions that intruded on the face-to-face interpretive milieu. Some of the effects would seem counter-intuitive to group members. Others would not. These unintended consequences were directly manifest in the reiteration of structures, but by presenting them here separately I hope to emphasize the image of effects that are distinct from the agency of actors — effects without the assignment of agency. In this way, the consequences take on a subjectless appearance.

The unintended consequences of caring in this group were related to (1) gender, (2) interactive engagement, and (3) interpretive field. Many of these unintended effects were one result of implicit type caring among group members.

Effects Related to Gender. Distribution patterns revealed gender differences that were unintended consequences of engaging in caring activities. Distribution patterns were marked by gender differences. The men were more involved in explicit-type patterns of caring than women. The women were more likely to make bids for releasing tensions (one kind of caring common in the group) by asking what they thought of as a "stupid" question, while men were more likely to make bids for caring through humor. Men were more likely to meet leadership needs of the group than women. The women were more involved in implicit-type caring than they were in explicit patterns of caring. Fewer bids for caring were offered up on behalf of or by women in

the group than on behalf of or by men in the group. These distribution patterns demonstrate that specific kind of gender inequality was one unintended consequence of the caring.

One similarity that can be spotted in this distribution is that females engage in less opportunities for more publicly empowering patterns of caring (namely explicit-type caring and meeting leadership needs of the group) Moreover, females did caring in the group that did not afford them as many opportunities to claim the kinds of identities that were highly valued by group members (namely, smart and witty identities). Instead, witty and smart identities were claimed in other ways or when others were making similar claims simultaneously. Also, females did not claim interactive power over the caring acts themselves to the extent that males did, as indicated by the difference in the number of bids offered and the number of sequences closed. This finding suggests that caring patterns did not extensively allow females to overcome typical patterns of inequality obtained through discourse and leadership practices. Females claimed a broader range of identities through their caring than the males did. In contrast to females, identity construction of the males did not include, for examples, "I am an aware person" or "I am a nice person."

When females did make bids for caring, usually through implicit patterns, they intended to be involved in more complex forms of caring. Caring was the most frequent means through which women in the group entered the conversation.

Effects Related to Interaction Engagement. Caring had unintended effects on the patterns of interaction. For example, care regularly resulted in closing off conversation topics. This happened most notably, but not only, when arguments increased in intensity. A well-intentioned participant would jump in with a joke or silly question in order to diffuse the tensions. In so doing, the discussion at hand was derailed, but the good feelings and positive identifications among group members were, in part, protected.

Carspecken (1996) recommends that ethnographers examine interactive power using a typology he adapted from Weber. This typology distinguishes interactive power according to the manner in which the openness to dialogue and the extent to which subordinates are engaged have the capacity/freedom to assent to the superordinate or the manner in which is force is used to secure actions regardless of assent — the most fundamental of which would be assent to the right of power over me (the subordinate). The superordinate stands in a strategic relationship to the subordinate(s). According to Carspecken (1996) following Weber, one type of power is coercion, where subordinates act in concert with the will of the superordinate in order to avoid sanctions or negative outcomes. This kind of power was not evidenced in this particular group with respect to caring. Another type of interactive power is charm. With this kind of power, the subordinate acts out of loyalty to the superordinate and in a way that diminishes the personal autonomy claimable by the subordinate. The superordinate would maximize the benefits of this loyalty for her own ends. Though certainly there was a lot of loyalty among the friends in this group, it lacked the strategic impetus and diminished personal autonomy to be recognized as a form of power. But the use of charm as power can be a bit ambiguous because it can accomplish more than bringing about a desired end. Many people asked me if caring was a form of power and I think the insight they might have been intuitively noting is related to charm. In this study, I did not ever find charm to be used solely as a form of interactive power. What I did find was that charm as a form of power was engaged primarily through the structures of service. What I mean by this is that the superordinate in the charm-power relationship

was recognized as such through the structures of service and the outcome would be that the subordinate would acquiesce to the superordinate as a way of maintaining the service relations so entrenched in the group's habits.

In egalitarian friendships, we might expect little force of power to be involved with little demarcation of superordinates and subordinates. Also, we might expect that forced action without assent would not feel good among friends. A very close look at the interactions of this particular adult-friendship group suggests that interactive patterns seemed to reiterate traditional power relations. According to Carspecken's (1996) interpretation of Weber's typology, there are two subtypes of traditional power. One involves normative power. This is when the subordinate consents to the higher position of the superordinate based on cultural norms. In other words, the subordinate does what the superordinate wants because of norms that underlie the basic structure of the subordinate-superordinate relationship. The other type of traditional power involves interactively established contracts. In this type of power, the subordinate is acting to secure favors or rewards from the superordinate. The normative type of traditional power was the one that found its way into the interactions of this group of friends. The power differential distinguishing superordinates from subordinates was buttressed through the structures of expertise described earlier in this chapter and gender — both of which we would be located as the normative type of traditional power. When care was invoked on behalf of superordinates, normative power was reiterated through the caring activities, but this was most certainly an unintended effect of the caring. For those group members who were subordinated to normative, care functioned as a momentary corrective to the power inequities. Care also functioned to buffer subordinates from the consequences of not doing what the superordinate wanted of them.

When caring acts did not reconstitute traditional normatively structured power relations (between superordinates and subordinates), the caring resisted these relations, pushing the group toward more egalitarian norms. For example, when a person deferred intellectually as an act of caring for their counterparts in the argument, the caring act itself pointed toward new norms capable of supplanting the normative power relations, like recognizing the worth of a group member outside the structures of expertise.

Effects Related to the Interpretive Field. One effect of objectifying needs so that others might help meet them is that this narrows the interpretive field of meaning. The most drastic narrowing of any field of meaning in an interaction comes through the process of reducing multiple claims to a single, unified objectivating claim. Some highly explicit patterns of caring required this as this made meeting the needs more efficient and effective. However, it also resulted in distortions — through rejecting, negating or ignoring other claims potentially salient to the meaning.

Moreover, the process of objectifying claims solidified relations between care and certain feelings and/or conditions. Reinstantiation of these relations through caring could bring about reification. Data indicated that the following set of stabilized linkages were reinstated systematically through caring as it was enacted by this group.

- Care was hooked to fear — fear of particular effects of outcomes that included health effects (for Grant), fear of outside threats (unfriendlies at the university), and fear of disassociation (not wanting to lose the group).

- Care was hooked to discomfort — primarily as release for interactional discomfort and awkwardness.
- Care was hooked to identity formation — given group norms for modesty, care was a primary vehicle for constructing positive identities among the members.

What happens when caring unintentionally brings about the stabilization of such linkages? The communicative potentiality becomes truncated. This is a crucial finding. For example, when there was discomfort in the group, it was nearly automatically (and certainly habitually) responded to through caring. No one persisted in exploring the causes of the tension, the manner or reasons the tension came up, or the pattern of bailing out on the particular conversation at hand because of the tension. Certain caring actions were engaged (like cracking a joke) and the tension in the group was released. The effect of this was to leave behind any other features of the pragmatic horizon that might yield new responses to the tension or reveal others needs situated in the tensions.

Some highly explicit needs (like practical needs for tangible things such as napkins or water) were expressed through meaning fields that were already quite narrow and within which there was a distinctive gap between foreground and backgrounded claims. In these cases, care did not impose a narrowing of the meaning field. Once in a while, caring acts picked up on highly backgrounded claims that were coupled with highly explicit, highly objectified needs, and in these instances the care worked to broaden the interpretations taken up through the interaction by bringing those claims more into the foreground. Caring shifted the horizon of meaning with broadening effects.

Caring acts were capable of bringing about unintended shifts in the pragmatic horizon of meaning (for more on pragmatic horizons, see Carspecken, 1996, 2003). Sometimes when the horizon of possible interpretations was suppressed, the person being cared for was interactively disempowered because it would be subtleties in identity claiming that would get censored. This itself was an unintended consequence that also had unintended consequences. When identity claims were suppressed, the result was the reiteration and ordering of very specific identity relations/claims to the exclusion of others. Another unintended consequence was the reinstatement of implicit prioritizing of group identities, values, and needs, even when caring was not aimed to accomplish this. In some cases that resulted in reconstructing the kinds of effects related to gender and interaction that were previously described, for example, recapitulating the structures of expertise. By prioritizing group habits, cultural structures, and generalized needs, the explication of counter, individualistic needs was negated and abandoned.

Summary and Speculation. Unintended consequences result when the reflexive monitoring of participants does not include the full range of possible, plausible outcomes. When this happens, the salient questions include "Why?" and "What (if any) systematic exclusions are marked by the unanticipated consequences?" Among this group of friends, there were systematic limitations on valuing identity claims that, in turn, contrasted with the narrow range of identities valued through the structures of expertise and service. And yet, this limitation reflects a contradiction with group members' ideas that they are "accepted by their friends for who they are." The promoted identity claims coincide with the economic reward system of the university (paying literature professors more than education professors, for example). The re-instantiation of gender privilege well-cited as part of patriarchal vestige, certainly runs counter

to how the group members would want to describe their interactions. And yet, these cultural conditions of sexism still supply background material for the group's interactions. It is helpful to be able to identify in a refined way how caring works against oppressive cultural conditions, but also works to reproduce those conditions.

Conclusion

The primary purpose of this chapter was to illustrate what an analysis of structures can contribute to critical qualitative studies and to describe one approach for conducting such an analysis. I used Carspecken's critical ethnographic methodology, which promotes beginning with hermeneutic reconstructive horizon analysis and moving into an analysis of structures that is informed by the reconstructive analysis.

In this study, I examined caring, which theorists like Noddings argue can only really be studied at the interpersonal level. Others have criticized care theory and research precisely because it has, until now, been unable to address questions like "What if caring activities reproduce conditions that are actually oppressive or distortive for the participants?" and "How can we judge the quality and content of caring in ways that go beyond the intentions of the actors?" By engaging in an analysis of structures involved in the caring activities of this group of friends, I was able to look more closely at the cultural conditions that both resourced and constrained the caring. I was able to articulate the structures that were both medium and outcome (particularly noted as unintended outcomes) of the caring. These unintended outcomes mark the contingent limits through which the friends were monitoring and interpreting their caring activities. A strong, critical social analysis will involve the hermeneutic reconstruction of meaning as would make sense to the participants and would simultaneously describe the cultural conditions through which volition is thought to emerge. This would be critical because it helps to locate disjunctures between agency and structure that inhibit our capacities to enact our full humanity (Freire, 1974). The findings could facilitate the critical awareness one acquires with respect to one's own oppression — this is what Freire (1974) called "conscientizacao." These structures can regularly escape the intentions and purposes of the actors who are involved in their engagement.

> Structural violence is exercised by way of systematic restrictions on communication; distortion is anchored in the formal conditions of communication action in such a way that the interrelation of the objective, social, and subjective worlds get prejudged in a typical fashion. (Habermas, 1987, p. 187)

This structural analysis is most meaningful if it does not abandon, but instead radicalizes, the understanding participants have of their own actions. "[W]hen pursuing forms of analysis that extend beyond the cultural horizons of the group you study, do so in a way that incorporates your [participants'] own insights and terminology." (Carspecken, 1996, p. 189)

Reflections

Critical researchers are "concerned about social inequalities, and we direct our work toward position social change" (Carspecken, 1996, p. 3). I care about conducting research that contributes to leaving the world better off. This requires careful attention to the lived experiences of

those who willingly engage with us in inquiry (Korth, 2005). It requires democratizing the research process as much as possible, for as Carspecken (1996) put it, research "rarely has purely neutral effects with respect to human welfare. Making your research as democratic as possible, from start to finish, is the best way to help rather than harm" (p. 207). It also requires that the researcher reflect on her own positionality, experiences, and claims to truth (Korth, 2005).

In our modern sciencing, even our social sciencing, the "objective observer" has been the privileged, admired, idealized research. This object research is separate — distinct — from the objects of research. Post-enlightenment theories have variously challenged this modernist view (Carspecken, 2003). There has been sufficient challenge to the idea of the neutral observer who has no stake in the research. Critical research is expressly part of this challenge. As a critical ethnographer, my research is fundamentally oriented toward reaching an understanding with participants. This was even more keenly salient in the present study because the participants were my friends and colleagues.

I had individual relationships with each of the participants with varying degrees of intimacy. I was compatible with the group on issues of professional ethics, treatment of others, and politics. Moreover, I understood a lot of the background context with respect to the groups' interactive history and individual experiences. I was an outsider to the group in the sense that my wit and cynicism were no match for the others. I was not as well read as Jim, Helen, Peter, or Grant. I was the only member of the group who did not drink alcohol or eat meat.

I sought to democratize the research process by interviewing participants multiple times, by providing the participants with copies of transcripts and papers so that they could comment on what I was writing and contribute to it. I dialogued regularly with my friends about my interpretations and I remained open to their correctives.

There is no doubt that this study was simultaneously about others and about me—as friend and researcher.

> He [the social scientist] must already belong in a certain way to the lifeworld whose elements he wishes to describe. In order to describe them, he must understand them; in order to understand them, he must be able in principle to participate in their production; and participation presupposes that one belongs." (Habermas, 1984, p. 108)

This participation should not be through strategic aims, but rather as a communicative equal, open to what others believe, hope, intend, comprehend, know, and care about. "You [the qualitative researcher] sense a place for your self in the meaningful acts of other people that might threaten the habitual ways in which you construct your self" (Carspecken, 1996, p. 170). As I described the structures at work through the caring, I was describing this with respect to my own interactions with my own group of friends. I was co-producer. I must also turn this critical, reflective analysis toward my own engagements.

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